

STATEWIDE IN ALASKA

Highlights: During the period from 1961 to 1968, Alaska registered the third highest rate of nonfarm job growth in the nation. Alaska's gain over the period was 39 percent compared with 26 percent for the country as a whole. Leading the nation was Nevada at 70 percent. The Bureau report was compiled from information submitted by cooperating State agencies including the Alaska Department of Labor's Research and Analysis Section. Even though Alaska has shown a high rate of job growth during the last decade its average annual rate of unemployment has continued to be far above the national average. A number of factors influence this. Among them are; the continuing highly seasonal nature of Alaska's economy; the national trend towards a decline in the number of unskilled jobs and the relatively high percentage of Alaska residents with little or no formal education. Also, recently there has been the influx into the State of substantial numbers of people seeking work. Because of the State's aggressive policy of training and placement of residents for all job openings that occur, most of these nonresident jobseekers have been unable to find work.

Two oil exploration firms, Western Geophysical and United Geophysical have taken steps towards providing training and jobs for rural Alaskans. The companies are being aided by federal funding through the Manpower Development and Training Act and by State Agencies including the Department of Labor. Already a five week course by Western has trained 15 native men for semi-skilled seismic jobs plus upgrading an additional nine men with prior seismic exploration experience. United's program is similar and includes on-the-job training on the North Slope. Both companies are aiming at training natives for entry level jobs as drillers. Although the better paying drilling jobs require mechanical ability, it has been noted that many Alaska Natives seem to have a natural mechanical aptitude. Therefore, a native with little formal education has a better chance of moving into a higher paying job in this area. Most other seismic exploration tasks require a strong electronics background. A special benefit for Alaska Natives of seismic exploration work, strangely enough, is its seasonality. Most seismic exploration is done during the winter months. This is ideal for many natives who fish commercially or find other work during the summer.

The Oklahoma based Pipeline Welder's Union reports that it will have more than sufficient manpower to handle welding projects associated with construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. Sources inside the union have said that there will be a labor pool of around 600 from which contractors can draw. Three hundred or so welders will be required during the first phase of pipeline construction scheduled to begin next spring. While the welders are joining the pipe, work at the pumping stations will be handled by members of Alaska locals of the Plumbers and Steamfitters Union.

Villagers in Karluk on Kodiak Island have recently completed construction of a fish products processing plant. The facility which is the Islands first

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independent cooperative will process salmon roe. Construction was financed by a RurALCAP Operation Mainstream labor contract. The contract paid the workman's wages while the villagers themselves supplied the materials. Further improvements planned include permanent wiring, plumbing and insulation. The plant is expected to result in a \$17,000 annual gross profit for Karluk.

It has been learned that Humble Oil and Refining Company plans to start work next spring on a two year, hard rock mining exploration program in the Wrangell area. The project will be supported out of Wrangell and will include an extensive core drilling operation. It is believed by industry sources that lead, zinc and magnetite iron ore will be the primary metals to be sought.

According to a reliable source, a locally owned company, Cortella Coal Corporation, is about to sign an agreement to deliver 100,000 tons of coal to Nichimen Co. Ltd. of Japan. The coal is to come from the Bering River coal fields in the area between Yakutat and Cordova. Currently, the company is calling for bids from local contractors for construction of 21 miles of road from the inland coal fields to the Gulf of Alaska and for docking facilities on the Gulf. Cortella holds leases on 18,000 acres covering known reserves in excess of ten billion tons. The coal is low volatile bituminous and is suitable for metallurgical work. Because it is of low ash content the coal is quite favorable to pollution conscious buyers. If orders are forthcoming, coal mining and related activities would provide an added source of employment for residents of the Cordova - Yakutat area.

Lumber exports from Alaska totaled 81.2 million board feet in the second quarter of 1969 according to figures released by the U. S. Department of Agriculture. This represents a considerable increase over both the second quarter '68 and the first quarter '69 figures of 54.4 million and 45.7 million board feet respectively. Totals for the first six months, however, show that 1969 lumber exports of 126.7 million board feet lag slightly behind the 1968 figure of 128.5 million. During both 1968 and the first half of 1969 virtually all the lumber exports went to Japan.

Plans have been announced for a 30 to 50 room hotel to be built in Bethel. The two story structure will be of modular wood construction and will cost in excess of \$800,000. It will include eating facilities, a cocktail lounge, an airline ticket office and a gift shop. Efforts are being made to work out an arrangement whereby the modular units can be fabricated in the Bethel Housing factory. The hotel will cater primarily to the tourist trade and will have an annual payroll of at least \$75,000. Currently negotiations are underway to have it operate under a Travelodge franchise.

Employment:

Total estimated employment maintained its seasonal downward spiral, falling to 100,000 in October. Contract construction employment declined by 900 as